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ABSTRACT

Most infants consume only breast milk or infant formula for the first 4 months, as their digestive systems and jaw and throat muscles are not ready for solid foods. Most healthcare professionals advise starting solid foods between 4 and 6 months of age, when infants can hold their heads up straight when sitting. The first solid food should be single-grain, iron-fortified baby cereal. After the first week, babies eat about four tablespoons of cereal mixed with four tablespoons of liquid twice daily, though babies' appetites can vary day to day. Between 6 and 8 months, other foods can be tried, with one new food introduced every few days to allow the child's system to adjust and to watch for unusual reactions. Single strained or pureed orange vegetables (e.g., squash) should be tried first, followed by green vegetables, and fruits. A baby's stool may change color upon eating new foods, but a skin rash, diarrhea, vomiting, or stuffy nose may be signs of a food allergy. Between 9 and 12 months, lumpy or chopped foods, such as vegetables, strained meats, or cottage cheese, may be introduced. By 1 year, most babies eat small, tender table foods, and cow's milk can be introduced. By 18 months, children are eating most solid foods. This pamphlet includes step-by-step instructions on first aid for a choking infant. (AC)

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ED 369 491

# STARTING SOLIDS

## A Guide for Parents and Child Care Providers

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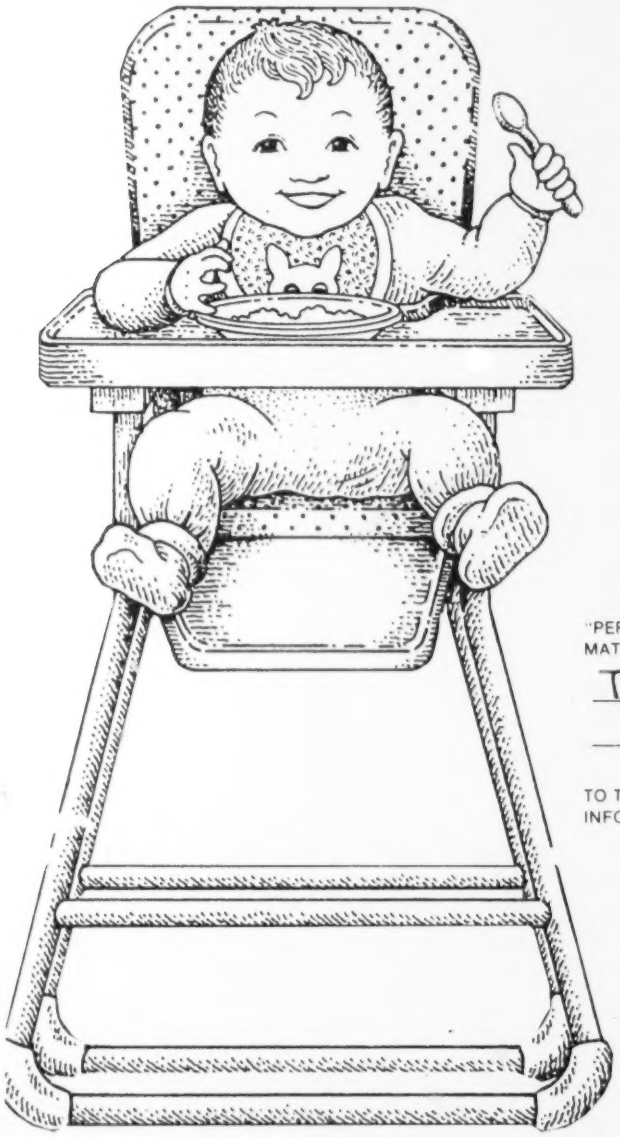

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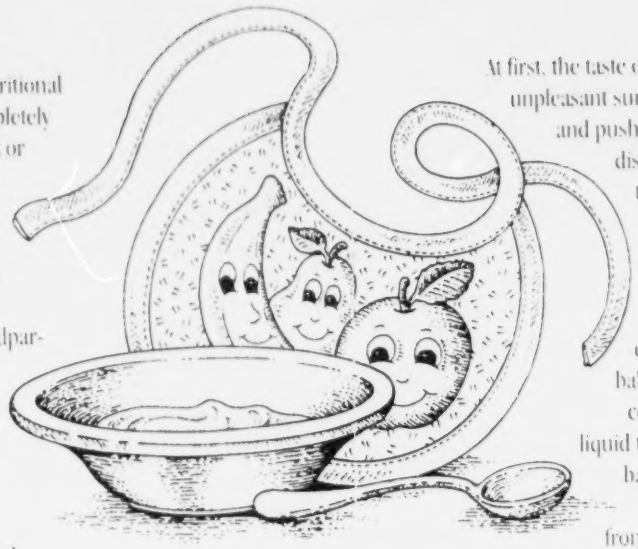
Although infants' nutritional needs are met completely through breast milk or infant formula for the first several months of life, there comes a time when they're ready to graduate to "solid" foods.

Naturally, parents, grandparents and child care providers alike have many questions about this important milestone: When are babies ready for solid foods? Which foods should be given? How much food is enough?



This brochure provides guidelines for introducing infants to solid foods, as well as tips for keeping mealtime safe. The information is intended to supplement the advice of your pediatrician, pediatric nurse practitioner or other healthcare professional.

## Newborns

Most infants consume only breast milk or infant formula for the first four months of life. These liquid food sources provide all the nutrients and energy needed for growth. Infants are also born with certain iron stores, which help get them off to a healthy start.

At this age, infants' digestive systems are not ready for solid foods. Their jaw and throat muscles also need time to develop the strength to handle various textures. Contrary to popular belief, solid foods will not help babies go longer between feedings or help them sleep through the night.

## 4 to 6 Months

Most healthcare professionals advise starting solid foods anywhere between four and six months of age. At this time, most infants can hold their heads straight up when sitting and can make chewing motions. They also start to suck in a new way.

The first solid food should be single-grain (usually rice) baby cereal, fortified with iron. Mix one or two spoonfuls of cereal with enough breast milk or formula to make it look like thin gravy. Use a small spoon with a long handle. The baby should be hungry but not starving.

At first, the taste of solid food may come as an unpleasant surprise. Most babies will make a face and push the cereal right out again. Don't be discouraged. Scoop the cereal from the chin and start over. Placing the cereal far back on the tongue also may decrease the amount spit out.

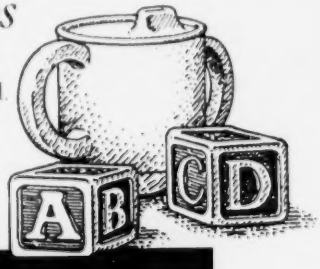
The amount and thickness of the cereal gradually can be increased. After the first week, most babies eat about four tablespoons of cereal mixed with four tablespoons of liquid twice daily. Always make sure your baby is sitting up to eat and drink.

Infants' appetites can vary from day to day. Babies indicate they are full by turning their head away from the spoon or holding their lips closed. Never force them to eat more food than they are willing.

At about five months, 100 percent fruit juices can be given or mixed with the infant cereal in place of other liquids. Some babies also are ready to try drinking from a cup. Approximately four ounces of apple, pear or other fortified fruit juices can help provide needed vitamin C. Orange and tomato juices, however, are too acidic and not recommended until about one year of age.

## 6 to 8 Months

Once the baby has mastered cereals, other new foods can be tried. Healthcare professionals usually recommend introducing one new food every few days to allow the child's system to adjust and to




### Starting Solids

*The following checklist can help you determine if a baby is ready to begin "solid" foods:*

- *Baby can hold head straight up when sitting*
- *Baby opens mouth when food approaches*
- *Baby is interested in food when others eat*
- *Baby is between four and six months of age*

watch for any unusual reactions.

Begin with one to two spoonfuls of a single strained or pureed orange vegetable such as squash, carrots or sweet potatoes. Green vegetables may be tried next, such as peas or string beans. Gradually increase the amount of vegetable to about one-half cup per day. Home prepared foods should be steamed, then mashed with a fork or pureed in a blender.

Stewed or pureed fruits such as apples, peaches, pears, apricots or prunes can be introduced next. Very ripe bananas also are good choices.

It's not unusual for the baby's stool to change color upon eating new foods. Don't be alarmed. However, a skin rash, diarrhea, vomiting, or stuffy nose may be signs of a food allergy. Stop feeding the new food and tell your baby's healthcare professional about the reaction at the next visit.

## 9 to 12+ Months

Between nine and 12 months, babies may have four to six sharp biting teeth. But they still won't be able to do much efficient grinding. Lumpy or chopped foods such as cooked vegetables, single strained meats or cottage cheese may be introduced.

By about nine months, many babies can pick up finger foods easily with their thumb and index finger. Gradually they grow more independent and may insist on holding a spoon when being fed or a cup with both hands while drinking. By this age, most babies eat three or four small meals a day.

If your family has a history of food allergies, it may be helpful to delay the introduction of certain foods such as wheat, egg white or cow's milk. Ask your healthcare professional to provide specific dietary advice.

By about one year of age, most babies eat small, tender table foods. Whole cow's milk can be introduced in the range of 16 to 20 ounces per day. Children need the fat in whole milk for proper growth and development; thus, low-fat milk should not be introduced until two years of age.

Children usually get their first molars at about 18 months and are eating most solid foods at this age. Most youngsters have their complete set of primary teeth by the time they reach two and a half to three years old, and are continuing to develop strength and dexterity in handling a wide variety of foods.

Young children should never be left alone while eating. Each year, about 70 children under age 10 die from food choking. Proper supervision is the best defense against such incidents.

## Feeding Timeline

*The following guidelines indicate when babies may be ready to graduate to various "solid" foods. Ask your pediatrician, pediatric nurse practitioner or other healthcare professional for specific feeding advice.*

| Months | May Begin... |
|---|---|
| 4-6 | Iron-fortified single-grain baby cereal |
| 5 | 100 percent fruit juices<br>Introduce cup |
| 6-8 | Strained and pureed vegetables and fruit |
| 9-12 | Strained meats poultry<br>Chopped foods<br>Babies start to feed themselves |
| 12 | Family foods |
| * | Whole milk<br>Orange or tomato juice<br>Babies feed themselves well |
| *24 | Low-fat milk |

## Safety at the Plate

*When feeding children under four years of age or children with developmental disabilities, take extraordinary care with foods that require extensive chewing or could cause choking if swallowed whole. Foods such as hot dogs, grapes, raw carrots, candy and nuts should be chopped up into small pieces or finely ground. Certain "hard" foods may not be appropriate for young children.*

*When watching young children, follow these simple guidelines:*

- *Always supervise them while eating. Choking incidents often occur when older siblings offer babies foods they're not yet developmentally ready to handle.*
- *Encourage children to take small bites and chew their foods completely. Young children have a tendency to bite off more than they can chew at any one time.*
- *Insist children sit down during mealtime or snacks. Never let them lie down while eating.*
- *Don't let children run or sleep with food in their mouths.*

# *When An Infant Is Choking*

AMERICAN RED CROSS FIRST AID

***For a conscious infant***

**1.**
**2.**

**Is Infant Choking?**
**Shout, "Help!"**

Call for help if infant

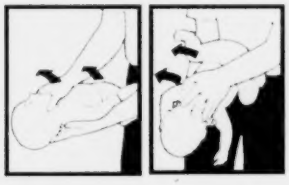
- cannot cough, cry or breathe
- is coughing weakly
- is making high-pitched noises

**3.**

**Phone EMS for Help**

- send someone to call for an ambulance

**4.**



**Turn Infant Facedown**

- support infant's head and neck
- turn infant facedown on your forearm

**5.**

**Give 4 Backblows**

- Lower your forearm onto thigh
- Give 4 backblows forcefully between infant's shoulder blades with heel of hand

**6.**

**Turn Infant Onto Back**

- Support back of infant's head and neck
- Turn infant onto back

**7.**

**Give 4 Chest Thrusts**

- Place middle and index fingers on breastbone
- Quickly compress breastbone 1/2 to 1 inch with each thrust

***If an infant becomes unconscious, place infant on a firm, flat surface***

**8.**

**Look for Object in Infant's Throat**

- Grasp tongue and lower jaw and lift jaw
- If you can see object in throat, try to remove it with a finger sweep

**To Do a Finger Sweep**

- Slide finger down inside of cheek to base of tongue
- Sweep object out

**9.**

**Open Airway**

- Tilt head gently back and lift chin

**10.**

**Give 2 Slow Breaths**

- Keep head tilted
- Seal your lips tight around the infant's nose and mouth
- Give 2 slow breaths for 1 to 1 1/2 seconds each

**11.**

**Give 4 Back Blows**

**12.**

**Give 4 Chest Thrusts**

**Repeat steps 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 until airway is cleared or ambulance arrives**

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